

## International Ferret Events

### **Ferret admiration spans the globe at ferret-related events.**

*By Jennifer Mons McLaughlin*

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The adorable ferret is winning hearts across the world.

Ferret owners prove time and time again that love knows no boundaries. And the special bond that exists between ferret owner and pet is not limited to the United States alone. Countries all around the world feel a love for ferrets and gather to share their excitement for this pet.

Ferret popularity is transforming the globe and is evident in the Netherlands Hungary and Australia, where ferret symposiums, geared toward teaching the ferret community more about the pets, generated a very positive response. "They are very popular [in our country]," said Balázs Gasparin, former leader and current member of the Hungarian Ferret Club Board. "There is an estimation that there are [tens of thousands] of ferrets in Hungary."

#### Ferrets In Hungary

The first ferret symposium in Hungary was held in 2005. "At that time there were no such events near Hungary," Gasparin said. "There was, and is, a great interest in this event." According to him, the breeders and owners enjoy the beauty contests, ferret agility contest and lectures for owners by veterinarians and professionals (in Hungarian). The knowledge attendees have walked away with has carried over into the ferret community.

"I'm proud to say that during the last few years feeding practices changed a lot," Gasparin said. "A few years ago many people fed with cheap cat food while now they feed meat."

The symposium has continued every year since with attendees learning more about many subjects including prolonged estrus, microchipping, common illnesses, parasites and adrenal disease. The organizers make sure the most important topics are repeated every year.

To the delight of organizers, the event exceeds expected turnout each year. "In 2005, we had 54 ferrets and about 600 visitors. In 2006, we had about 140 ferrets and around 1,000 visitors, and in 2007, we had 150 ferrets and around 1,000 visitors," Gasparin said.

The benefits are far-reaching. "Many foreign breeders visited the event and got to know each other and an international cooperation started too," Gasparin said. "The judges are invited from foreign countries, so there are a lot of things to learn from them."

The symposium was held the first two years in a dormitory area in Budapest, and in 2007 it moved to a culture house located in Törökbálint, close to Budapest.

#### Upcoming Events

The popularity of international ferret symposiums continues to grow. Below are tentative dates for 2009.

The Netherlands  
March 2009

Hungary  
Törökbálint  
Two symposiums are planned for 2009; one early and one late in the year, dates to be determined

Australia  
Sydney  
mid to late 2009

Ferrets In The Netherlands



Ferrets are also very popular in the Netherlands and many ferret clubs have formed to create a network for ferret owners. The first symposium here was held in 2006. "This got started after Dr. Hanneke Moorman and I went to the symposium in Atlanta," said Stephenie Baas, chairman to the ferret club Stichting "De Fret" and co-founder of the ferret symposiums for the Netherlands and Belgium. "We were so impressed that we decided to try it in Holland."

The reaction couldn't have been better. The event was held at Pim Jacobs Theater in Maarssen in the Netherlands. "We have held two symposiums. We have a capacity for 250 people, and both times we were sold out several weeks before the closing date," Baas said.

Topics and speakers included From Polecat To Ferret And Ferret Behavior, Bob Church; Alternative For Castration, Dr. Nico Schoemaker; Ferret Dietary And Looking After The Older Ferret, Dr. Susan Brown; and The Results Of The ADV Testing And Research In Holland, Dr. Hanneke Moorman.

#### Ferrets In Australia

The first Ferret Health Symposium was held in Melbourne, Australia, in May 2008. As first reported on SmallAnimalChannel.com, "The popularity of ferrets as pets is on the rise in Australia, but most information about the pets was coming from the United States — and the ferret information didn't always apply to Australian ferrets, according to Shirley Hewett, an organizer of the event and one of the founders of the International Ferret Congress in Australia."

Forty-one ferret enthusiasts attended the event. Speakers and topics included History Of Domestication, and Teeth And Diet, Bob Church; Blockages, and Cardiomyopathy, Dr. David Neck; Natural Diet and Periodontal Disease, Dr. Tom Lonsdale; Ferret-Proofing Inside And Out, and Diet Logistics, Shirley Hewett; Adrenal Disease, and Insulinoma, Dr. Jerry Murray; and Sarcoptic Mange, and Heartworm, Dr. Lynda Bonning. The event also provided a question and answer session with a veterinarian panel.

#### Alike But Different

A comparison of ferret care in different countries. [Click Here>>](#)

#### A Worldwide Ferret Connection

In addition to the symposiums gaining popularity throughout the world, The World Ferret Union and World Ferret Information Centre is responsible for working on behalf of ferrets on an international basis. While its goal is education just as with the symposiums, it is being done through other avenues.

"As our aim is to spread information between ferret organizations and veterinarians in our newsletter, the International Ferret Newsletter, we don't have meetings," said Sabine van Voorn and Han de Vries with the World Ferret Union and World Ferret Information Centre. "We do visit such happenings sometimes, but as the name international implies, we can't organize them as we have members in the United States, Australia, Europe and so on."

#### A Better Life For Ferrets

Those passionate about ferrets are taking responsibility for providing the proper education and information to ferret lovers around the world. The good news is that whether it is through symposiums or other avenues, the word is getting out about ferrets. It's easy to love ferrets, but now more owners have the ability to learn how to properly care for their pet. And that shows the greatest love of all.

Jennifer Mons McLaughlin lives in Minnesota and has been writing about the pet industry for more than 10 years.